

believes that society is a living growth that must either obey the laws of its being or perish. Standing still, he says, means stagnation and petrification. Even to preserve the existing social order requires constant readjustment to new conditions and influences from without and within.

To the conservative's plea that things be left as they are, for fear that worse evils may come, Mr. Chesterton replies: "But what if things will not remain as they are? Here is a post painted white. Leave it alone, advise the opponents of reform. Don't try to paint it some other color. So we shall always have a white post." But that, points out Mr. Chesterton, is exactly what they will not have. Left to the influence of wind, dust, and rain, your white post soon becomes gray, and in time black. To keep it white it must be repainted. Letting things alone does not guarantee against change.

Dan Beard, artist and head of the admirable Boy Scout organization, has pictured in a cartoon the mistaken idea of the conservative that there would be no labor troubles or social disturbances if it were not for the radical agitators who stir up strife. In the middle of a broad, smooth-flowing stream he depicted an upthrown mass of rock, solid, unyielding; around which the water swirls and foams. The rock is the conservative, whose objection to the passing of the river causes the turbulent rapids. The real disturber is the immovable object. The worst enemy of existing institutions is not the fantastic theorist who wants to make the world anew overnight, but the stubborn reactionary who clings to old forms long after they have outlived their usefulness.

The British Labor Platform

WE have received a copy of the Labor Speaker's Handbook used by the British Labor Party. We quote from that part referring to the Taxation of Land Values which leaves little to be desired:

The Labor Party holds that the whole value of land—that is whatever cannot be shown to be due to actual expenditure of money or labor by the owner or occupier—ought to be public revenue; but until this can be secured by public ownership, the Party favors a carefully devised scheme for the Rating and Taxation of the owners of Land Values, in relief of the occupiers, provided that adequate steps are taken to prevent the owner from securing for himself, either by raising the rent or the selling price of land, the benefits that are intended to accrue to the occupier or the community.—See pamphlet, "Labor and the Countryside."

BASIC PRINCIPLES

This policy is based on the following principles:

The land which Nature provided as the physical basis of life ought to be treated as common property.

When land is in private hands, those who hold it should be called upon to pay to the people a rent or tax for it.

That this tax or rent should be based on the true market value of the land apart from the value of any improvements which may be in or upon it.

The tax should be made payable whether the land is being used or not.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS

The immediate effect of a direct tax upon the value of land would be the opening up of land for productive purposes. It would end the present system which allows a landowner to be assessed at £490 for land which has a value of £50,339 when it is required for building purposes (the Bellingham site purchased by the L. C. C.). Under Labor's land value tax scheme, the owners of land would be taxed according to the value of their land as entered in the taxation roll: this same valuation would be the basis of the purchase price. The pressure of the tax so levied would compel the owners of land either to use their land or to make it easy of access for those who would be willing to use it. In this way we would promote the development of the land, and, by virtue of the fact that more land had been brought into use, rents would be reduced. The effect of opening up greater opportunities to labor must be readily appreciated by those who are suffering from unemployment. Apart from these economic considerations, there is the just claim, that as the land value is unquestionably the creation of the community as a whole, therefore the community have a moral right to appropriate through the machinery of taxation a part, or, if need be, the whole of the land value of the country.

There are further declarations in condemnation of indirect taxation and the resulting increased cost of living. We cannot avoid contrasting these explicit and economically sound statements of the British Labor Party with the platform of the American Labor Party in which the principle of so much importance to labor is timidly advanced and linked up with measures that are more than questionable:

We favor the repeal of all taxes on articles of consumption and common use, and the substitution therefor of a rapidly progressing inheritance tax, an excess profits tax, high surtaxes on large incomes and a special tax on land values due not to the productive labor of the owner, but to speculation or commercial growth.

Single Tax and Labor Unions

HENRY GEORGE himself was a member of a printers' union, but Single Taxers are under no delusion regarding the purely temporary nature of all gains in wages brought about by combinations among workmen. Slowly but surely the irresistible pressure of the man out of work and bidding for employment—that unnatural auction active at all times and accentuated in dull times, that characterizes the labor market—must determine the rate of wages in the final adjustment.

That unions are able to arrest the tendency of wages to a minimum in isolated occupations, or again in highly skilled trades, may be conceded, but that they are effectual in unskilled occupations, or that they have any appreciable effect upon the general rate of wages, will hardly be contended by the more intelligent trades unionists. It is one of the curious anomalies of the situation that if labor could effect a general or universal increase in the rate of wages, it would be in the final result no increase at all, since it

would be swallowed up in increased rents and increased cost of commodities, but chiefly in increased rents.

UP WAGES, UP GO PRICES

This would not be the case were the capitalist or employer of labor in receipt of the unpaid wages of labor. In that event combinations of workers might be able to enforce conditions by which they would retain their full wages, and there would be no corresponding increase in the cost of commodities such as now results from wages raised artificially by combination. But here again because land is the one element that reflects in increased rents all the gains that come from improvements in conditions, the advantage to labor at most would be doubtful.

But it is not the employing class that receive the unpaid wages of labor. If that were so the only wealthy class would be the employing class, small business men would grow rich, merchants, store-keepers, all men with capital to employ labor, would flourish everywhere. Yet everyone knows that such is not the case. It should be tremendously significant to those who wish to get at the real cause of low wages, that, whatever the legerdemain be by which wealth is diverted from the channels of labor to those who do little or no labor, the result is independent of the action of the employers of labor, whether individual or concerted. Generally speaking, these men appear to be at the mercy of a force they did not create and cannot control, over ninety-five per cent. of them going to the wall in the fierce economic struggle of which they are equal victims with the workers.

The truth therefore appears to be this: Unless a rate of wages forced up by combination adds to the wealth of the community, such increase must cause a rise in the price of commodities and must be paid by the general consumer, and that if it were possible to effect a general increase in the price of commodities, the rent of land under the unrestrained private control of natural opportunities that prevails, would absorb all or a greater part of the gain.

To this there are some exceptions, these exceptions being the monopolies where prices are now so high that to raise them would be to reduce the consumption and lower profits. But the number of such monopolies so situated is few. It might be thought that the coal monopoly is one, but it will be recalled that the increase of wages secured some years ago in the coal industry was followed by an increase in the price of coal per ton, which increase has continued every year and has swallowed up many times the increase in wages.

UNIONS AND EFFICIENCY

Another instance among the very few in which increase of wages forced by combination is not visited upon the community in higher prices is where higher wages result in greater efficiency. Labor unionists are fond of pointing out that union labor is the more efficient. But that this is one of the results of labor unionism may well be doubted. Indeed, the imposed restrictions as to hours, apprentice-

ships, etc., may be fairly regarded as counterbalancing the tendency to any increased efficiency brought about by labor unions. That the membership of labor unions comprises types of greater efficiency arises from the fact that men of higher intelligence feel more strongly the impulse to co-operate with their fellows for mutual benefit. Such efficiency exists therefore independently of the higher wages secured by combination, though it is an economic law of profound significance that high wages do conduce to greater efficiency. This, however, is true as applying to wages that are high in a natural and unrestricted market, and not to wages forced up artificially by combination. In the latter case, as we have indicated, other and different factors enter which profoundly affect the result.

CRITICIZING UNIONISM

The criticisms leveled at trade unionism by those unfamiliar with the underlying laws of distribution are mostly of a wholly untenable character. The failure to recognize the helpless position of the worker who has only his labor to sell in a market where opportunities are restricted by the holding of land out of use has led to the suggestion of remedies wholly fantastic and to the abuse of labor unions wholly irrational. Labor unionists, on their part, failing to recognize the relations of labor to land, strike at an imaginary enemy, the capitalist, the employer, himself at the mercy of those who control the natural opportunities, for if labor starves without land, capital wastes, and both must make equally necessitous bargains. Both must yield all above a bare subsistence. And thus we see what an intelligent knowledge of the forces at work would have enabled us to predict—interest and wages stationary or falling and land values rising.

For a final dissipation of the popular confusions and false notions that cling around the question of wages, a reference should be had to the law of wages, as stated by Henry George, and his demonstration of the fallacy that wages are drawn from capital or are dependent upon the amount of capital set aside for their payment.

JOSEPH DANA MILLER, in *Buffalo Labor Journal*.

WHEREVER the ownership of the soil is so engrossed by a small part of the community that the far larger number are compelled to pay whatever the few may see fit to exact for the privilege of occupying and cultivating the earth is something very like slavery.

—HORACE GREELEY.

You are taxed to send agents abroad to drum up sales for our factories. Then you are taxed to prevent trade at home.—H. M. H.

GOD's laws do not change. Though their application may alter with altering conditions, the same principles of right and wrong that hold when men are few and industry is rude, hold also amid teeming populations and complex industries.—HENRY GEORGE.